

Research Summary

What if anything does recent interest in Peircean Pragmatism add to our understanding of the epistemic properties of democracy? This question is of practical, as well as philosophic, interest, because citizens care about the substantive properties of collective decisions – their truth, their reasonableness, their morality, their efficacy – and not just the procedural correctness and legitimacy of the ways in which they were made. There has long been an interest in Deweyan pragmatism and its implications for democracy – particularly in the area of democratic education and in philosophical debates about the best way to justify democracy or to think about political justification.¹ However, the work of Robert Talisse and Cheryl Misak has drawn attention to the significance of Peircean epistemology for democratic political philosophy and, in particular, to the possibility that democratic commitments to freedom of expression, association and political choice might give us epistemic reasons to support democracy even when we are unsure about the morality of the policies or decisions which it generates. In short, Peircean pragmatism, at least as developed by Talisse and Misak, claims to illuminate the epistemic dimensions of democratic government in ways that shore up its legitimacy, and improve political practice.² This project seeks to determine whether or not Peircean pragmatism can provide the promised philosophical illumination and political guidance.

The project has three parts. The first part seeks to clarify the key elements of a Peircean conception of democracy, (hereafter PD) as formulated by Talisse and Misak, and to draw out the links between truth and democracy they claim are implicit in Peirce's epistemology. The second part of the proposal presents and evaluates existing debates on the epistemic dimensions of democracy, focusing on both the internal debate amongst 'deliberative democrats' about the place of reason and truth in politics, and on recent critiques of deliberative conceptions of democracy from 'realist' political theorists and those who are openly sceptical about the wisdom and virtue of citizens. The third part of the project seeks to determine whether PD offers anything of philosophical or practical interest to deliberative democrats confronting their realist and sceptical critics who claim that they overestimate the scope for moral agreement amongst citizens, and exaggerate the truth-tracking potential of democratic procedures. This project therefore provides a critical overview and assessment of normative democratic theory, as it has developed in recent years, in ways that will be of interest to moral philosophers, epistemologists and historians, as well as political scientists.

¹ Richard Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy," in *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (Cambridge University Press, 1991); Axel Honneth and John M. M. Farrell, "Democracy as Reflexive Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today," *Political Theory* 26, no. 6 (1998); Melvin L. Rogers, *The Undiscovered Dewey: Religion, Morality, and the Ethos of Democracy* (Columbia University Press, 2009).

² Robert B. Talisse, *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy* (Routledge, 2007); Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation* (Routledge, 2000).

Detailed Research Plan

Does the wide distribution of political power in democracies, relative to other modes of government, result in better decisions? What, if anything, can be said about the substantive properties of political decisions which have been arrived at democratically? Specifically, do we have any reason to believe that they are *better* qualitatively – more reasoned, better supported by the available evidence, more deserving of support – than those which have been made by other means? These are the problems which have dominated democratic political theory in recent years, generating a veritable explosion of philosophical debate about the moral significance of different ways of institutionalizing democratic debate and decision-making.

This project seeks to provide a philosophical overview and evaluation of this literature, focusing specifically on whether Peircean pragmatism shows us that democracy has epistemic qualities which should lead us to support it even when we are most sceptical and disenchanted with the outcomes it has generated. If Talisse and Misak are right, the legitimacy of democratic government is epistemic as well as moral or political: because democratic freedoms, rights and institutions – or so they claim – enable people to distinguish true from false beliefs better than the alternatives. Because we all – no matter our particular beliefs – have reason to want our beliefs to be true and, qua believers, suppose that what we believe is, in fact, true – Talisse and Misak claim that we have compelling epistemic reasons to support democracy even if we are bitterly divided about the morality of abortion or capital punishment, or about the political wisdom of interventionist wars or economic policies.³ In short, if Talisse and Misak are correct, Peircean epistemology gives us compelling reasons to affirm the legitimacy of democratic government even when we are most exasperated or repelled by our fellow citizens, and most disenchanted with democratic politics. PD also appears to imply that deliberative forms of democracy (DD) have a philosophical justification which is more robust and much less contentious than either its proponents or opponents suppose. The aim of this project is to see whether the claims made on behalf of PD withstand critical scrutiny and what we can learn about the nature and justification of democracy from PD's strengths and weaknesses.

To this end, *our project is divided into three parts*. In the *first part*, we carefully present and evaluate PD, based on the work of Talisse and Misak, paying attention both to the common insights into the links between truth and democracy which they share and are actively developing in joint publications, and to the

³ Robert B. Talisse, *Pluralism and Liberal Politics* (Routledge, 2012); *Democracy after Liberalism: Pragmatism and Deliberative Politics* (Routledge, 2005) and 'Sustaining Democracy: Folk Epistemology and Social Conflict', *Critical Review of Social and Political Philosophy*, 6.4. (2013); Cheryl Misak, "A Culture of Justification: The Pragmatist's Epistemic Argument for Democracy," *Episteme: A Journal of Social Epistemology* 5, no. 1 (2008). Cheryl Misak and Robert B. Talisse, "Debate: Pragmatist Epistemology and Democratic Theory: A Reply to Eric MacGilvray," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 22, no. 3 (2014): 366–77.

differences of emphasis, method and substance in their views. The controversy surrounding the work of Talisse and Misak has been mainly concerned with the adequacy of their interpretation of Peircean epistemology and less with the specifically *democratic* parts of PD.⁴ We seek to rectify that, by examining the assumptions about democracy embedded in Talisse and Misak's work, as well as the specific links between truth and democracy which they try to draw.

Our approach is motivated by considerable sympathy for their project, since it is plausible that democratic freedoms and procedures do, as claimed, facilitate the creation and promotion of important epistemic goods – such as the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood, to discover new truths and to assess or reassess old ones. However, democracies appear also to face distinctive epistemic challenges, given the weight of popular opinion and its malleability, which forms of government that are less free and less egalitarian may not face, or may be better placed to withstand. So, longstanding concerns about the epistemic properties of even the epistemically best forms of democracy (however defined) suggest that Peircean epistemology may not have the dramatic implications for political morality which Talisse and Misak claim.

Moreover, even if Misak and Talisse are right about the epistemic advantages of democracy, compared to the alternatives, it is unclear that these epistemic advantages are, as they assume, sufficient to meet two different types of moral and political criticism. The first comes from disenchanted or despairing citizens of actual democracies, and the second comes from philosophical critics of deliberative democracy – the form of democracy that appears best suited to realize the epistemic hopes of PD. *The second and third parts of this project* evaluate PD in the light of these challenges. Specifically, they ask whether PD is able, as claimed, to justify continued support for democratic government by disenchanted citizens, when the sources of that disenchantment seem to be so various, and so deep, implying that there is no set of democratic reforms capable of meeting people's conflicting needs, interests and desires? How, we want to know, will the epistemic virtues of democracy, however great, persuade those who deem their democracies irremediably corrupt, morally obtuse or indifferent, to keep faith with democracy? To answer these questions we will examine both 'realist' and 'sceptical' critiques of deliberative democracy, and will draw on

⁴ Gary Browning, ed., "Symposium in Talisse," *Contemporary Political Theory* 9, no. 1 (2010); Robert B. Talisse, ed., "A Symposium on Robert Talisse's A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy," *Transaction of Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy* 45, no. 1 (2009); Colin Koopman, "Good Questions and Bad Answers in Talisse's A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy," *Transaction of Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy* 45, no. 1 (2009); Melvin L. Rogers, "Dewey, Pluralism, and Democracy: A Response to Robert Talisse," *Transaction of Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy* 45, no. 1 (2009); Matthew Festenstein, "Pragmatism, Inquiry and Political Liberalism," *Contemporary Political Theory* 9, no. 1 (2010); Eric A. MacGilvray, "Democratic Doubts: Pragmatism and the Epistemic Defense of Democracy," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 22, no. 1 (2014).

the empirical and social-scientific literature about political alienation and conflict in contemporary democracies, which underpins political and philosophical arguments for compulsory voting and more participatory and direct forms of citizen engagement.⁵

‘Realist’ critics of deliberative democracy believe that it is unrealistic to expect democracies to achieve the levels of reasoned agreement on morality and politics necessary for democratic legitimacy on deliberative views of democracy. Hence, they imply, we must either abandon the idea that democratic procedures, suitably understood, generate morally binding agreement by making politics more reasoned, or we must abandon the idea that democratic legitimacy depends on approximating an ideal of unconstrained agreement between free and equal citizens. Either way, realists imply, deliberative democrats are wrong to think that the justification of democratic government has much to do with the substance of democratic decisions, rather than with the attraction of democratic procedures themselves, at least as compared to the alternatives.⁶

‘Sceptical’ critics of deliberative democracy are less concerned than ‘realists’ about whether there really is room for an ‘overlapping consensus’ on the morality of politics, nor are they particularly worried about the ability of deliberation and the careful structuring of political competition to alleviate conflicts between individual rationality and collective rationality, suggested by Arrow’s theorem.⁷ Instead, they claim that deliberative democrats overstate the cognitive and epistemic capacities of most citizens, and their interest and willingness to engage in democratic politics. As a result, they claim, deliberative democrats underestimate the moral and epistemic difficulties of democracy, at least in its more participative and inclusive forms, and unjustifiably ignore the moral and epistemic merits of more elitist forms of democracy, on the one hand, and of ‘lottocratic’ and ‘epistocratic’ alternatives to representative democracy, on the other.⁸

⁵ Annabelle Lever, ‘Compulsory Voting: A Critical Perspective’, *British Journal of Political Science* 40.4 (2010) 897-915 and “Democracy and Voting: A Response to Lisa Hill,” *British Journal of Political Science* 40, no. 4 (2010) 925-929; Archon Fung, *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy*, (Princeton University Press, 2006) and Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright eds. *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations oin Empowered Participatory Governance*, (Verso, 2003).

⁶ The paradigmatic figures here are Raymond Geuss and Bernard Williams: Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Bernard Williams, *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument*, ed. Geoffrey Hawthorn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁷ James Johnson provides a helpful account of Arrow’s theorem and its significance for deliberative conceptions of democracy, in ‘Arrow’s Impossibility Theorem’, *Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, (Wiley, 2015), available at https://www.academia.edu/8571251/Arrows_Impossibility_Theorem_-_Encyclopedia_of_Political_Thought_2015_

⁸ E.g. Claudio Lopez-Guerra, *Democracy and Disenfranchisement: The Morality of Electoral Exclusions*, (Oxford University Press, 2014); Alexander Guerrero, “Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 42 (2014); Jason Brennan, *The Ethics of Voting* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

In the *second and third parts of this project*, therefore, we will use realist and sceptical challenges to deliberative democracy to assess the strengths and weaknesses of PD. In this way, we will be able to see what, if anything, PD adds to existing efforts to present an ‘epistemic conception of democracy’, on the one hand, and to efforts to present an ‘epistemic justification of democracy’ on the other. Although these two strands in deliberative democratic theory are, in principle, compatible there are those, like Joshua Cohen, who espouse the former, without actually espousing the latter.⁹ They therefore imply that we can reject realist and sceptical claims about democracy without supposing – as do Talisse and Misak – that the epistemic virtues of democracy have special *justificatory* significance as compare to the moral and political virtues of democracy. Conversely, if Talisse and Misak are right, it may be possible to provide an epistemic *justification* of democracy without an epistemic *conception* of democracy on some version of a *pluralist* conception of democracy, such as Dahl’s¹⁰. Were this possible, PD would be a much more robust approach to democracy than expected, and would have surprising political, as well as philosophical, implications. Thus, by examining the differences within deliberative strands of democracy, as well as between deliberative democrats and their critics, we will be able to test the political and philosophical properties of PD and to determine what, if anything, PD offers to citizens disenchanted with democracy, to political scientists interested in the varieties of democracy, and to political theorists and philosophers struggling to understand and evaluate democratic claims to legitimacy.

The Methods Used in this project are philosophical: the clarification of concepts, the interpretation of texts and philosophical claims, the assessment of the coherence, plausibility and persuasiveness of arguments by examining the fit between their premises and their conclusions (vulnerability to internal critique) and their ability to withstand criticism from alternative perspectives (vulnerability to external critique). For example, PD depends on the claim that our interests in truth are better served by democratic government than by benevolent dictatorship, because the latter precludes the ability of citizens to maintain truth-promoting circumstances, once achieved. This is plausible and reflects familiar objections to absolute monarchs, however benign. However, it is unclear what degree of control over their collective life representative democracy usually gives citizens, or what assumptions about fact and possibility Misak and

⁹ Joshua Cohen was the first to present what he called an ‘epistemic conception of democracy’. His writings on the subject are numerous, and will be carefully studied in this proposal. See his ‘Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy’ in *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, eds. Bohman and Rehg (MIT Press, 1997), reprinted along with other key articles in his collection *Philosophy, Politics, Democracy* (Harvard, 2009). Deliberative democrats such as Jane Mansbridge, Melissa Williams and Iris Marion Young appear also to share Cohen’s assumption that the main justification of democracy is moral and political, not epistemic.

¹⁰ Robert A. Dahl’s *On Democracy* (Yale 1998) is the classic statement of democratic pluralism, as a political system. However, Dahl’s *Democracy and its Critics* (Yale 1989) and *A Preface to Democratic Theory: Expanded Edition* (Chicago, 2006) contain important clarifications and revisions of his ideas. David Held’s *Models of Democracy*, chs. 5 and 6 (Polity, 2006) provides an excellent guide to the differences between ‘competitive elitism’, inspired by Schumpeter, and pluralist approaches to democracy, inspired by Dahl.

Talisse are making. Hence, it is important to establish whether or not the internal logic of the arguments for PD is sound and, if not, what *other* forms of government, if any, might follow from our interests in truth.

Moreover, it is unclear *that* we are as committed to verifying the truth of our ideas as Misak and Talisse suppose, simply because we generally assume that our beliefs are correct, (as opposed to useful, beautiful or entertaining). It is also unclear that democratic government reliably fosters our interests in truth. There appears, therefore, to be scope for an external critique of their arguments, which challenges both their premises about the importance of truth to citizens - and scope for external critique based on scepticism about the place of truth in democratic government. Issues of interpretation are also important to this project, because Misak and Talisse appear to take representative as opposed to participative democracy as the appropriate test of PD. But participatory democracy would seem to be as much a form of democracy as representative democracy, and both types of democracy come in a variety of forms, whose consequences for truth and citizen control are very different. Conceptual clarification (what is meant by 'democracy') and interpretative assessment (such as the differences between representative and participatory democracy, or what philosophical or actual examples would be instances of each) will therefore form key elements of the project, along with the excavation of implicit assumptions, and the use of real and hypothetical examples to illuminate and/or substantiate philosophical arguments.

Current State of the Field

As noted, most of the debate around Peircean democracy is conducted by philosophers more concerned with the epistemic, than with the moral and political, aspects of the claims presented by Misak and Talisse. This is perfectly understandable, given that Peirce had next to nothing to say about democracy and a great deal to say about epistemology. As a result, contentious claims about politics and morality are ignored in the literature on PD, as are implicit and often questionable assumptions about political sociology and psychology. For example, ever since Plato those who value truth in politics have been quite sceptical about the advantages of democracy, and even those, like Tocqueville and Mill, who thought that democracy had distinctive epistemic advantages also believed that it suffered from distinctive defects, such as the power of public opinion. So attention to the implicit sociological, political and moral assumptions animating PD is important.¹¹ Moreover, while epistemic democrats, like Joshua Cohen, insist that properly structured democratic deliberation can provide reasoned judgements about what is for the common good of citizens,

¹¹ Alexis de Tocqueville *De la démocratie en Amérique* (especially vol. 2, published in 1840). See also John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, (1869) and available free at <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/authors/mill.html>

they generally also insist that a commitment to democratic equality sets quite sharp limits to claims of truth in the justification of policy, for reasons connected to what Cohen refers to as ‘reasonable pluralism’.¹²

There is now a huge, varied and heated debate around the topic of ‘reasonable pluralism’ – what it means, what it implies about democratic equality, liberty and legitimacy. Fortunately, this project is only concerned with a very specific subset of these debates: namely those necessary to determine whether claims of truth can have sufficient hold on democratic politics for Misak and Talisse to be right about the merits of PD. If realist critics of deliberative democracy, such as Raymond Geuss, are correct, there is no way to reconcile reasonable pluralism and a substantially epistemic argument for democracy. Hence, Geuss implies, if we want political judgements to have a reasoned basis, we have to abandon the ideals of inclusive, non-sectarian justification which explain philosophical interest in the political implications of pragmatism, and of Peircean epistemology, in particular.

But there are good reasons to think that Geuss overstates the matter. Not all disagreement is reasonable, or able to withstand critical scrutiny, nor does the fact that controversial religious views have a justificatory role in public policy show that the policy cannot be justified by other means. When we take these points on board, there may – as Cohen believes – be more scope for reasoned agreement on politically-relevant facts and values than critics maintain – enough, at any rate, to support PD. However, determining whether or not this is the case requires careful examination of quite complex debates amongst political philosophers about political ideals and their implications for politics.

At present the literature on reasonable pluralism and the literature around PD do not really intersect. We will fill that gap: hence the importance of our project. We are also aware that Joshua Cohen has, in recent years, presented his views on truth in politics on different occasions, and are awaiting the publication of his Tanner Lectures, summarizing this research. These constitute essential evidence (a) of what a key epistemological democrat believes reasonable pluralism to imply about truth and democratic politics; (b) illuminates the range of logically consistent and normatively attractive positions on truth and democracy; and (c) enables us to evaluate realist and skeptical critiques of deliberative democracy and their implications for PD. Prof. Lever has asked Cohen for the manuscript of his lectures, as their publication has been delayed. She is confident that he will send it, given its importance to this project.

Finally, two points should be made about the state of the literature relevant to this project. The first is that Misak and Talisse’s ideas about our epistemic interests in democracy, even if justified, give us no reason

¹² ‘Reasonable pluralism’ refers to the fact that intelligent, conscientious and informed people will often reach quite incompatible conclusions about matters of fact and value, and are not unreasonable to do so, even though they cannot all be right. See Joshua Cohen, ‘Moral Pluralism and Political Consensus’ in *The Idea of Democracy*, eds. Copp, Hampton and Roemer, (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

to believe that *other* efforts to justify democracy epistemically must succeed. So, even though we are skeptical about some of the claims for PD, the strengths and weaknesses of PD can be distinguished from those of David Estlund, on the one hand, or of H el ene Landemore on the other.¹³ Because the focus of our project is PD, we are interested in the work of Estlund and Landemore only as illustrations of the strengths and weaknesses of non-Peircean claims that our interests in truth justify support for democratic government. We can, therefore, avoid having to engage much of the controversy surrounding these authors.¹⁴

The second point about the literature on PD is that it is predominantly Anglophone. While several philosophers in Switzerland are interested in Pragmatism, Deliberative Democracy and the work of Raymond Gaus, their work has been published in German, not English. This limits their impact on the debates that we are interested in – but unfortunately it also means that we cannot read it, as neither of us speaks German. We have every intention of asking Professors Hartmann (Lucerne) and Marti (Zurich) for their help and advice at each stage of this project, as well as engaging any younger scholars working on pragmatism in Switzerland. However, at present ours would be the only project within Switzerland actively involved in these philosophically important debates. Nonetheless, as we explain below, we believe that our project will be of interest to many philosophers in Switzerland, because arguments about PD have important implications for epistemology and philosophy of science, as well as for moral and political philosophy. Reviewers for Lever’s last FNS project (100017_159549/1, accepted March 2015), noted its experimental character. This project, by contrast, seeks to extend existing lines of philosophical inquiry in order to illuminate the significance of truth for the justification of democratic government. Given its subject matter and methods, its findings will be of wide philosophical application and interest in Switzerland, we hope, as well as elsewhere.

¹³ David Estlund, *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework*, (Princeton University Press, 2008); H el ene Landemore, *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence and the Rule of the Many*, (Princeton University Press, 2013).

¹⁴ At a recent meeting in Lausanne at which we were both speakers, (the colloquium ‘Intelligence collective et tirage au sort en d emocratie’, Oct 24-25, 2013) Landemore seemed not to realise that Cohen does not wish to justify democracy epistemically, and holds assumptions about democratic justification *different from* and potentially *incompatible with* her own. See also Jeffrey Friedman, ed., “Symposium on H el ene Landemore, *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence, and the Rule of the Many*,” *Critical Review* 26, no. 1 (2014). Paul Gunn, “Democracy and Epistocracy,” *Critical Review: A Journal of Politics and Society* 26, no. 1–2 (2014): 59–79. Ilya Somin, “Why Political Ignorance Undermines the Wisdom of the Many,” *Critical Review* 26, no. 1–2 (2014): 151–169; Jason Brennan, “How Smart Is Democracy? You Can’t Answer That Question a Priori,” *Critical Review* 26, no. 1–2 (2014): 33–58.

Schedule and Milestones

We are applying for three years of funding, during which period we will complete the research described, issuing in a book-length manuscript which we will jointly draft, as well as a series of articles written jointly and separately. In the final year of the project, we will apply for funding for a conference on pragmatism and democracy to be held in the last months of this project, and which we will use both to publicise our research, to cement the research networks that we have created during this project, and to lay the foundations for research which we plan to do once it is completed. Because of Professor Lever's teaching and research commitments, the bulk of the research will be carried out by Dr Chin. However, Professor Lever will be actively involved in the interpretation and evaluation of findings, the construction of hypotheses and ideas about how to test them (in philosophy this is mainly a matter of determining which authors and which texts are likely to provide the critical evidence for or against a particular claim, and what different interpretations and implications need to be considered). She will also be actively involved in the writing and rewriting of joint publications and will be available to guide, read and reread Dr. Chin's solo publications.

Year 1: We will jointly publish research that we have already undertaken, as well as research which is central to the second part of this project: namely, the place of epistemic considerations within deliberative theories of democracy. As our evaluation of Peircean contributions to democratic theory stands or falls on the analysis of the epistemic components in democratic theory, this is the first area of research that we will complete. To make it easier to get critical feedback, and to make any necessary revisions to our ideas, we propose jointly to write, present and publish two articles. The first is called 'Epistemic Conceptions v. Epistemic Justifications of Democracy: a Typology of Deliberative Democracy'. The second is called 'The Epistemology of Democracy: Does Democracy Need an Epistemic Justification?' Whereas the first is meant to provide an analytic survey of the literature, and to highlight the importance of distinguishing epistemic conceptions of democracy from epistemic justifications of it, the latter seeks to clarify the reasons why philosophers have been drawn to the idea of an epistemic justification of democracy – to the problems of consent and legitimacy, in particular, which such a justification is supposed to solve – and will cast a critical eye on the progress that has been made thus far.

Year 2 will be devoted to two tasks. **Task a** is the presentation and analysis of Peircean democratic theory and **Task b** is the presentation and analysis of Johnson and Knight's *The Priority of Democracy: the Political Consequences of Pragmatism*, (Princeton University Press, 2011), and the many articles on democratic equality, deliberation and on method which they have written.¹⁵ Early on in year 2, Dr. Chin will

¹⁵ For example, their joint article, 'On Attempts to Gerrymander "Positive" and "Normative" Political Theory; Six Theses', forthcoming in *The Good Society*, (2015) and 'What Sort of Political Equality Does Deliberative Democracy Require?' in eds. Bohman and Rehg supra; and Johnson's 'Liberalism and the Politics of Cultural Authenticity', *Politics*,

complete two review essays – which he will subsequently adapt for solo publication – ‘Peircean democratic theory’ and ‘Recent Pragmatist Democratic Theory’, accompanied by a list of recommended readings and research summaries which we will then use for our joint article, ‘Peircean Democratic Theory: Epistemology and Ethics’. This article will elaborate on the concerns in Lever, 2015, about how Talisse and Misak understand people’s interests in the truth of their beliefs, and their moral and political duties to others. It will take account of the recent writings of Talisse and Misak, and the existing state of philosophical debate, including published and unpublished responses to the special issue on pragmatism in *Political Studies Review* 13.3. (2015), edited by Dr. Chin and Michael Bacon. Our aim is to ensure that our presentation and evaluation of Peircean democracy is fair and critically sound, and adequately takes account of contributions to PD by thinkers other than Talisse and Misak.

In **Year 2**, Lever will complete **Task b** by providing a review essay – subsequently to be revised for publication – on the pragmatist democratic theory of Jim Johnson and Jack Knight. Their use of rational choice theory and of cultural anthropology in their Dewey-inspired conception of democracy, provides an important point of comparison both to more conventional work on deliberative democracy and to PD. However, Johnson and Knight’s work is complex, quite technical and drawing out its significance for our project requires prior research on PD and epistemic democracy. By concentrating on this task in year 2, we plan to lay the groundwork for the speedy completion of the third and final part of our project, in year 3, because Johnson and Knight are particularly interested in the institutions which turn individual judgements into collective judgements, and in the socio-cultural dimensions of knowledge and belief. Their work, therefore, engages directly both with realists criticisms of deliberative democracy – criticisms mainly aimed at its idealizing dimensions and use of abstract models of agreement – and with sceptical claims about the competence and virtue of citizens.

Johnson and Knight distinguish between democracy as a first and second-order decision procedure and show that our interests in expertise and in speedy decisions are consistent with valuing democracy as a way of deciding how first-order decisions should be taken, (democracy as a second-order procedure), even when our judgement is that those first-order decisions should be taken by an expert body (e.g. a constitutional court, a group of specialized administrators or civil servants), rather than by citizens collectively. It therefore provides an important critical perspective on sceptical and realist objections to democracy, while accepting that some claims made on behalf of deliberative democracy are too general or too optimistic to be credible. Their work also highlights the importance of breaking down talk of ‘democracy’ into a more specific and nuanced account of different institutional structures, different decision-procedures

Philosophy, Economics, (2002) and ‘Arguing for Deliberative Democracy’ in Jan Elster, ed. *Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

and different ways in which people may understand themselves and their relations as citizens. Thus, carefully working through the important research of Johnson and Knight in Year 2 will prepare the way for the assessment of PD's contribution to deliberative democracy which we will complete in Year 3.

In **Year 3** Lever and Chin will complete three tasks. **Task a** involves drawing together the findings from years 1 and 2, in order to formulate our conclusions about PD and deliberative democracy. **Task b** involves the grant writing and administrative preparation necessary for the international conference on Peircean democracy and its critics, which we plan to hold in Switzerland at the end of the third year. **Task c** is the writing of a draft book manuscript presenting and summarizing our research in this project.

Task a requires us to make a summary of the persuasive objections to deliberative democracy from realist and sceptical perspectives, to explain why they are persuasive and how these differ from, and can be sustained philosophically, while rejecting other objections to deliberative democracy. This, in essence is a summary of the findings from Year 1 and from **Task b** in Year 2. We will then see what these tell us about the advantages and disadvantages of PD as compared to deliberative democracy, using our work from **Task a** in Year 2. At each point in the project we will have written summaries of the literature and of our findings. We therefore expect **Task c**, the drafting of a book manuscript based on this project to be relatively easy.

In order to facilitate the communication of our findings, and the evaluation of our work, we plan to organize an international conference, to be held in Switzerland, which will bring together experts on Peircean pragmatism and its critics. At the beginning of Year 3, therefore, we will write grant applications to the FNS and to European and American philosophical associations, in order to fund a conference in the summer of the third year. From the moment we know that we have funding for this project, we will start to invite likely participants, and to establish what dates will best suit them, so that by the beginning of Year 3 we will be able to concentrate on finalizing the administrative and funding arrangements for the conference. This, in essence, is how Lever organized the large international conference on democracy, which was held at the University of Geneva in June 2012, with funding from the FNS.¹⁶ We hope to collaborate with Martin Hartmann, a specialist on Deweyan pragmatism at the University of Lucerne and with Urs Marti, at the University of Zurich, as well as with philosophers in Geneva and Berne.

However, it is important to note that some of the publications associated with this project will not be *completed* during its duration, although they will be *drafted* during the three years' of funding that we request. The reason is simple: we want to ensure that a maximum of research is carried out and drafted while we have the necessary funding, and are both in Geneva. From there to turning drafts into publications

¹⁶ FNS 10CO17_141720, 'Moral and Political Perspectives on Democracy; An International Conference'.

is relatively easy, and can wait until the project is completed. We are particularly keen to draft a book manuscript together before funding ends, because this will be difficult to do if we are not together. It is improbable that we can complete the book in three years, given Prof. Lever's teaching and research commitments. But the important thing is to have a substantial draft that we can send to colleagues for advice, can present to publishers for consideration, and that will make it relatively easy for us to complete in the year following the end of this project. The University of Montreal has a very prestigious book manuscript workshop,¹⁷ at which distinguished professors in one's field provide feedback on one's manuscript. We will apply to this workshop at the end of the third year, as it would help us to turn our manuscript into a book that effectively communicates the goals and findings of this project.

The Researchers and the Current State of Their Research

Prof. Lever is the main applicant and Principle Investigator (PI) of this project. She is Associate Professor of Normative Political Theory in the Department of Political Science and International Relations of the University of Geneva, author of *On Privacy* (Routledge, 2011), and editor of *New Frontiers in the Philosophy of Intellectual Property* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), and an expert on privacy, democratic theory, racial and sexual equality and intellectual property. She has published extensively in the top journals in her field, and recent publications on privacy and neuroethics, privacy and freedom of expression, on racism and racial equality have appeared, or will shortly appear, in prestigious collections from Oxford and Cambridge University Presses.¹⁸ She is, with Debra Satz of Stanford University, the editor of a collection of essays in honour of Joshua Cohen. (The project is under discussion with OUP, and the likely publication date is December 2016). Her project, 'A Democratic Conception of Ethics' was recently awarded a three-year grant from the FNS (Décision 100017_159549/1). It concerns the methodological and substantive implications of the belief that democratic government has a prima facie legitimacy which alternative forms of government lack, and is designed to contribute to the political philosophy of democracy and to ethics and public policy. Our current project, like this one, draws on Lever's published research on compulsory voting, the secret ballot, judicial review and political representation, (www.alever.net) as well as her work on deliberative democracy and lay participation in democratic politics,¹⁹ but its focus on pragmatism is wholly

¹⁷ The award is annual: <http://publicreason.net/2014/10/07/the-2015-annual-montreal-political-theory-manuscript-workshop-award/>

¹⁸ 'Privacy, Equality and the Ethics of Neuro-imaging' in eds. Edwards, Richmond and Rees, *I Know What You Are Thinking: Brain Imaging and Privacy*, (OUP, 2012); 'Privacy, Democracy and Freedom of Expression', in eds. Roessler and Mokrosinska, *Social Dimensions of Privacy*, (forthcoming CUP, 2015); and 'Race and Racial Profiling' under contract for ed. Naomi Zack, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Race*, (forthcoming OUP, 2016).

¹⁹ 'Democracy, Epistemology and the Problem of All-White Juries', under review at the *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, special issue on the 'Critical Philosophy of Race; Beyond the USA'. The paper was presented at the conference, which motivated the special issue, which is peer-reviewed. 'Democracy, Deliberation and Public Service Reform: the case of NICE', in eds. Kippin, Stoker and Griffiths, *Public Services: A New Reform Agenda*, (Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2013).

new. It reflects her engagement with Talisse's work in the past year, as well as her recent work on freedom of conscience and democratic equality, which highlight the distance between individual interests in truth, and the scope for claims of truth in democratic politics.²⁰ These mark a significant development in her research and teaching, and form part of the research which underpins this project.

Prof. Lever is also an ethics advisor to the European Directorate of Research and Innovation, a member of the *Working Group on Dual Use- Misuse of EU-Funded Research*, a reviewer for several of their postgraduate research programmes, as well as for the Irish Research Council. She is a member of the editorial board of the *Critical Review of Social and Political Philosophy* and of the *European Journal of Political Theory*, a 'Correspondant à l'Etranger' for *Raison Politique*, and was, from 2011- 2014 on the editorial board of the *Swiss Political Science Review*. Prof. Lever has, therefore, a good sense of the directions of recent research in political philosophy in Europe and America, as well as of the gaps between areas of cutting-edge research. However, she also has a lively appreciation of the needs of scientists, administrators, citizens and politicians for ethical guidance, and their frustration at the gap between their needs and the work that preoccupies most philosophers.

Though not an expert in pragmatist political theory, Prof. Lever recently published a critique of Talisse's work, 'Democracy and Epistemology: A Reply to Talisse', which was published, along with a rejoinder by Talisse, in the January 2015 issue of the *Critical Review of Social and Political Philosophy* (it was submitted and accepted just before she joined the journal's editorial board).²¹ In it, she notes the similarities between Talisse's philosophical ambitions and those of Jurgen Habermas and John Rawls. However, Talisse seeks to justify democratic freedoms and an egalitarian form of politics without the very considerable philosophical baggage adopted by Habermas and Rawls. If, on the one hand, this makes for an appealingly minimal and, potentially, less controversial approach to problems of morality, the worry is that Talisse simply does not have the philosophical resources to accomplish his objectives. In order to substantiate these worries, Lever highlighted some puzzles in Talisse's conception of democracy, (for example, his assumption that representative government is less epistemically and morally demanding than direct democracy), and raised some doubts about whether citizens who are disenchanted with democratic government for moral or political reasons would really find themselves drawn to support it for the epistemic reasons which Talisse presents. It is this article, and her dissatisfaction with Talisse's courteous response, which motivated the development of this project, which draws on her doctoral training in critical theory, democratic theory and

²⁰ 'Equality v. Conscience? Ethics and the Provision of Public Services', forthcoming in *The Philosophers Magazine*, 69. (July 2015); 'Democratic Equality and Freedom of Religion: Beyond Coercion v. Persuasion' forthcoming in *Journal of Philosophy and Public Issues*, (July 2015); 'Taxation, Conscientious Objection and Religious Freedom', *Ethical Perspectives* 201.1 (March 2013), 144-153.

²¹ A. Lever, 'Democracy and Epistemology: A Reply to Talisse', *CRISPP* 18.1. (Jan. 2015), 74-81

Rawlsian political philosophy with Prof. Joshua Cohen at MIT, and her long experience researching and teaching political philosophy ever since.

Dr. Clayton Chin, who is an expert on pragmatist political philosophy and its implications for Continental, as well as Anglo-American thought, is the perfect partner for this project. Dr. Chin gained his PhD in political science from Queen Mary College, University of London in 2013. He is currently a postdoctoral fellow at Royal Holloway College, University of London, where he is working with Dr. Michael Bacon, an expert on pragmatism and author of *Pragmatism: An Introduction*, (Polity Press, 2012), and a Short-Term Postdoctoral Fellow in the Faculty of Philosophy at KU Leuven. His doctoral thesis, "Pragmatism, Liberalism and the Conditions of Critique", clarified pragmatism's relation to the dominant approaches in political theory both Anglo-American and Continental. Focusing on the work of the pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty, it argues that his model of "philosophy as cultural politics" addressed the tendency to detached abstraction within Anglo-American liberalism and Continental political thought, and defended Rorty's philosophy from complaints that it is inherently conservative and accommodationist to whoever is in power.²² Chin's thesis, therefore, fills a critical gap around the methodological contributions of pragmatism to political theory and provides critical insights into the dominant approaches while contributing originally to Rorty's scholarship.

In the past two years Chin has written a book, *Rorty Between Pragmatism and Continental Thought*, based on his doctoral research. It will be published by Columbia University Press in 2016. He has 2 articles which recently appeared in *Studies in Social Political Thought* and *Contemporary Pragmatism*, both leading journals in contemporary political thought and pragmatism. 'The Impossibility of Post-Metaphysical Thought' argues that the continental method, in its focus on ontological critique, can expose the widest assumptions of our politics but that it does not offer the privileged framework that is often assumed by its proponents.²³ The latter, 'Engaging the Present: The Necessity of Reading Rorty', argues that Rorty's pragmatist methodology, although much of it was theorized in the 1980s and 90s, anticipated emerging dynamics in recent liberal thought (e.g. the realist turn) around the primacy of political, over moral categories.²⁴ He is the editor of a forthcoming special issue on "Continental and Analytical Political Theory: An Insurmountable Divide?" for the *European Journal of Political Theory* (accepted before Lever joined their editorial board), and

²² The best account of this critique is: Matthew Festenstein, "Politics and Acquiescence in Rorty's Pragmatism," *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory* no. 101 (2003).

²³ Clayton Chin, "The Impossibility of Post-Metaphysical Politics: Ontology and Thought in Rorty, Heidegger, and Marcuse," *Studies in Social and Political Thought* 22 (2014).

²⁴ Clayton Chin, "Engaging the Present: The Necessity of Reading Rorty," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 12, no. 1 (2015).

of a forthcoming special issue on recent pragmatist political theory for *Political Studies Review*.²⁵ The latter will include contributions from Misak and Talisse and will, therefore, be a significant primary source for subsequent discussions of Peircean pragmatism. Finally, Dr. Chin has two articles which will shortly appear in the *European Journal of Political Theory* and *Public Reason*. (Again, the former was accepted before Lever joined the journal's editorial team). The first, entitled 'Beyond Analytic and Continental in Contemporary Political Thought: Methodological Pluralism in Pragmatism and the Situated Turn', argues that the methodological pluralism inherent in pragmatist approaches creates an invaluable opportunity to transcend this longstanding and unproductive division in philosophy and political theory.²⁶ The second, 'Challenging Political Theory: Pluralism and Method in the Work of Bernard Williams', critically examines the realist current in contemporary political theory, and its connections to its alleged source in the distinguished, but recently defunct philosopher, Bernard Williams.²⁷

Dr. Chin is, then, a young and very talented scholar with important publications on pragmatism behind him, and a well-developed research network which will provide support and advice for this project. His experience perfectly complements that of Professor Lever, enabling her to bring her expertise in democratic theory and political philosophy to bear on pragmatist political philosophy, and enabling Dr Chin to deepen his knowledge of democratic theory and to engage with the empirical and social theoretic literature on democracy. Professor Lever and Doctor Chin first started working together a few months ago, although they have not yet met and both are currently completing other projects. This proposal is the outcome of that joint research; its purpose is to enable Dr Chin to come to the University of Geneva on a postdoctoral fellowship so that they can start to publish the research which they have already undertaken, and can undertake the joint research which constitutes this project.

We should also note that the doctoral work of two of Lever's students – Martha Sandoval and Henri-Pierre Mottironi – will prove useful for this project and will be strengthened by it. Sandoval's project, which she is in the process of finalizing, concerns the scope for direct democracy within representative political systems, and the ways in which their use might alleviate problems of political alienation and inequality, without threatening the legitimacy of legislative institutions. Precisely because PD is insensitive to the differences between direct and representative forms of democracy, and to the rather different criteria of legitimacy appropriate to each, Sandoval's work will be helpful for us and, in turn, will highlight the

²⁵ Clayton Chin and Michael Bacon, eds., "Pragmatism and Political Theory," *Political Studies Review* 13, no. 3 (2015); Clayton Chin and Lasse Thomassen, eds., "Continental and Analytical Political Theory: An Insurmountable Divide?," *European Journal of Political Theory* 14, no. 3 (2015).

²⁶ Clayton Chin, "Between Analytic and Continental in Contemporary Political Thought: Methodological Pluralism in Pragmatism and the Situated Turn," *European Journal of Political Theory* 14, no. 3 (2015).

²⁷ Clayton Chin, "Challenging Political Theory: Pluralism and Method in the Work of Bernard Williams," *Public Reason* TBD (2016).

philosophical significance of her findings. Mottironi is the author of a prize-winning MA thesis on democracy and lotteries, which Lever supervised.²⁸ In the past nine months he has been refining his doctoral proposal which concerns the philosophical and practical consequences for deliberative conceptions of democracy of empirical, experimental and social-theoretic studies of deliberation. The research that he has undertaken suggests that epistemic justifications of democracy have a considerable evidential hurdle to surmount, because deliberation often replicates, rather than undermining, patterns of deference and social hierarchy, as Lynn Sanders suggested in a famous article on jury deliberation.²⁹ Again, while Mottironi will obviously benefit from the chance to work with Dr. Chin, as well as with Lever, his research may be quite helpful for this project. We would hope to be able to engage in joint publications with Sandoval and Mottironi in the course of their doctoral research and would, of course, include them in the conference which we will organize in the third year of this project.

Significance of the project

Our research highlights the differences between epistemic conceptions of democracy and epistemic justifications of democracy and draws attention to the possibility – unexplored thus far in the philosophical literature – of an epistemic justification at the individual level for types of democracy whose reliance on non-deliberative ways of aggregating individual judgements mean that they fail to count as examples of epistemic democracy. Since most forms of developed constitutional democracy arguably fall into this category, it is important to note that even our epistemically very imperfect political institutions may, nonetheless, meet people's interests in truth sufficiently to deserve their support and allegiance. As the arguments for PD turn on individuals' interests in the truth of their *own* ideas, rather than individual interests in the quality of *collective* judgements, our research suggests that PD may well provide an epistemic justification for some relatively non-deliberative forms of democracy. Although Misak and Talisse appear to suppose that PD implies a deliberative form of representative democracy, our research suggests that some forms of pluralist democracy will be justified by their arguments, although pluralism is an *alternative* to deliberative democracy. However, the implication of their rejection of benign dictatorship is that elitist or Schumpeterian forms of democracy will fail their epistemic case for democracy. Our research, therefore, reveals quite specific, testable hypotheses about the significance of PD for democratic theory – hypotheses that have important implications not only for the coherence of PD (the fit between the premises and the supposed conclusions) but also for the strengths and limitations of PD from a moral and political perspective. This makes our assessment of Misak and Talisse innovative and interesting even for those who are not particularly curious about the consequences of PD for deliberative democracy. However, to have a

²⁸ Henri-Pierre Mottironi, 'Démocratie et Loterie', (MA Thesis, DISPRI, Unige, Spring 2013), *Prix Marie Schappler*.

²⁹ Lynn M. Sanders, 'Against Deliberation', *Political Theory*, 25.3. (June 1997), 347-376.

clear sense of the latter will be an enormous help to moral and political philosophers, because the implications of PD for deliberative democracy can overturn our assumptions about political justification and the types of government which deserve citizen obedience and support.

The importance of this project is not purely intellectual. This project has, in addition, an important institutional dimension, because it will enable us to create research ties with the philosophy department at the University of Lucerne, and help to strengthen the links between philosophers working in the department of political science and those working in the department of philosophy at the University of Geneva. Funding for one postdoctoral assistant, therefore, will enable us to create collaborations which will be useful not only to this project, but for future research and for the teaching of doctoral students. This is possible because our project lies at the intersection of several philosophical disciplines – epistemology, moral and political philosophy, philosophy of science - and draws on research in empirical political science (citizen behavior and attitudes, voter alienation, studies on deliberative practices and outcomes) as well. It will therefore facilitate collaboration between Geneva and Lucerne, where Prof. Hartmann, a specialist on Deweyan pragmatism and democratic theory, works. Professors Lever and Hartmann have wanted to collaborate for a while, and have presented work at each other's seminars. However their research interests, thus far, have not overlapped sufficiently to make collaboration possible. This project will change that, because of its subject matter and because Dr Chin, as a postdoctoral student with no teaching commitments, will be freer to travel than they are.

The project will also lay the foundation for collaborative research and teaching with the philosophy department at Unige. Prof. Lever has participated in doctoral exams and hiring committees for the philosophy department, and Prof. Weber is interested in joint teaching, as well as in joint events. As you may know, the philosophy department at Unige no longer teaches or hires in moral or political philosophy and is, instead, focusing on its specialties in epistemology, metaphysics and philosophy of science. This project engages directly with with Prof. Weber's interests in Philip Kitcher's claims about democratic science, and with the political aspects of epistemology more generally. Before Prof. Lever's arrival in the Political Science department, in January, 2011, there had been no new doctoral student in political theory for several years. There are now four students preparing to write a doctorate with Lever including one, Martha Sandoval, who is funded by the Mexican government and came to Unige after completing her Masters at the London School of Economics. Alexandra Couto, a Swiss philosopher on a postdoctoral fellowship in Vienna, applied to the FNS this year (January, 2015) for an Ambizioni Fellowship to work with Lever on 'The Ethics of Public Discourse'.³⁰ Couto's concern is with the ethical implications of emotional content in public discourse – a subject which bears on our research in this project. Prof. Lever is, therefore, the head of a growing research

³⁰ Alexandra Couto, 'The Ethics of Public Discourse: Timing and Emotions', FNS application PZ00P1_161436

group, capable of attracting new members and of supporting collaborative projects with other philosophers, in Geneva and elsewhere.

This Fellowship would enable Lever to hire her first postdoctoral assistant and to create the network of scholars working on democratic theory which she has dreamed of since arriving in Switzerland.³¹ At present we punch below our weight in the international philosophical arena because, while good, philosophers in Switzerland are relatively isolated from each other, and because the Continental/Analytic Divide, as well as the linguistic divide within philosophy, exacerbates our geographical isolation. This project, which spans important areas of Anglo-American and Continental philosophy, will make it easier for us to engage on a common set of problems, without jeopardizing our particular research interests and agendas. Hence the significance of this project for Switzerland is institutional as well as scientific.

³¹ To that end, Lever started the Geneva Colloquium in Political Theory (www.gecopol.net), which attracts speakers from Switzerland as well as Europe and America, and has an audience of academics from Lausanne, as well as non-academics in Geneva.